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PLEDGE

Government of West Bengal

AN EVALUATION OF A PLEDGE

INTRODUCTION :

"June 21, 1977" is a memorable day in the political history of West Bengal. On this day, the Left Front, with massive mandate from the people took over the administration of West Bengal. This ended the uninterrupted three decades of misrule of the Congress Party in this State, but for a brief spell of two United Front Governments, one in 1967 and the other in 1969. A new type of Government pledged to serve the interests of the toiling people was formed.

Three years have passed since the formation of the Left Front Government. What are the Government's achievements and failures if any, during this period? It is an occasion for stock taking. Before that it is necessary to make certain basic observations relating to limitations under which the Government had to function and the hurdles it had to encounter.

At the time when the Left Front assumed the responsibility of running the Government at the b... of the overwhelming majority of the ... not suffer from any illusion. ... under the present ... valent in the ... bring about ... life of the people ... e same-



time it firmly believed that even under the existing socio-economic structure it was certainly possible to adopt and implement time-bound measures which would result in activisation of the stagnant economy and would give much needed relief to the vulnerable sections of the society, provided there was political will and scope for the people of the State to be actively associated with the developmental process at every stage.

The Left Front was conscious that its positive performances in the interests of the people would strengthen the struggle for realisation of ultimate goal of bringing fundamental changes in the existing socio-economic structure. Its positive performances would highten the level of political consciousness of the masses of the people, and make them, particularly the toiling masses, conscious of their own strength. These would also generate a sense of self-confidence among them, and, through its positive performances in the interests of the people, could make a favourable impact on the people of other states sooner or later.

36 POINT PROGRAMME :

The significance of the Common Minimum Programme of the Left Front, popularly known as the "36 Point Programme", should be understood in the above light. Obviously

It Is not a socialist programme. The 36 Point Programme is not aimed at bringing fundamental changes in the existing socio-economic structure. It is a Blue-Print for revival and activisation of the State's stagnant economy and for giving relief and protection to the vulnerable sections of the society through a series of economic, political, social and administrative measures.

The 36 Point Programme, unlike the programmes of some other political parties, particularly the ruling party at the Centre, has not made any tall and high-sounding promises to the people. It has not made any promise which is impossible to implement.

The objective of Left Front's 36 Point Programme has been aptly summarised in the programme itself: "The Common Minimum Programme of the Left Parties will seek to serve the interests of the people in the political, economic and social spheres, help them in protecting their living standards, and offer them relief from the conditions of acute distress to which they have been reduced during the 30 years of Congress misrule. The Left Parties shall strive to ensure a clean administration free from corruption, nepotism and inefficiency. It shall be the constant endeavour of the Left Parties to stand by and uphold the political and economic rights of the toiling people and help them in their struggles for preservation and extension of these rights with a view to ushering in a better future".

We should assess the performances of the Left Front Government in terms of the 36 Point Programme. It is necessary to point out that it is a long-term programme to be implemented step by step. Legacies of 30 years of Congress misrule cannot be wiped out in three, four or five years. It may be asked: Whether any beginning has been made for implementation of the 36 Point Programme. The reply is categorically in the affirmative. The Left Front Government had to work with limited powers, encounter hurdles, and combat the conspiracy by reactionary elements and forces of vested interests. But these could not deter it from vigorously implementing many of the items of the 36 Point Programme. This was unthinkable during the previous regime.

WEST BENGAL UNDER THE PREVIOUS REGIME :

The significance of the achievements of the Left Front Government in the past 3 years can only be properly grasped against the situation that had prevailed during the previous Congress regime.

The common minimum programme (36 Point Programme) states in its preamble :–

While in the crest of the repressive might of the Government unleashed in full fury against the people after the promulgation of the second Emergency, West Bengal has been experiencing it practically everyday since 1970 with all its fangs exposed after the rigged 'Victory' of the Congress in the 1972 election. West Bengal has been turned into testing house of repression and terror which became an all-India phenomenon during the duel Emergency. An unabashed reign of terror had been let loose on this State with the help of the police and para-military forces like the CRP, BSF, etc., in collusion with armed anti-social elements reared by the ruling Congress. Political workers were hounded out of their habitat. Many were killed...

Political and trade union workers were thrown of their jobs enmasse and were not allowed by Congress hoodlums with the help of the police to enter their places of occupation; many were dismissed by the employers on the plea of absence from duty...

Offices of Left Parties and Left Mass Organisations were ransacked and or taken over forcibly by Congress rowdies...

Educational Institutions including Universities were made the happy hunting-ground of anti-social elements under the Congress banner; many of them masquerading as students and capturing students' unions either without elections or through fake elections...

As an inevitable consequence the sufferings of the workers, peasants and the middle-class people became more acute. They were deprived of all their democratic rights. The erosion of the living standards of the people continued during the duel Emergency.

Particularly the agricultural labourers, the share-croppers and poor peasants were subjected to great suffering. Unemployment in towns and villages mounted to an alarming extent, prices of essential commodities went far beyond the reach of the common man, the workers and employees were deprived of legitimate bonus and their dearness allowance reduced...

The Left Front Government inherited from the previous regime a shattered economy and an authoritarian and repressive administrative machinery encouraging all along corruption, favouritism, and nepotism. In fact the State's economy during the period 1970 to 1976 came to a virtual standstill. It was not an easy task to correct the economic imbalance created through three decades of misrule which was further aggravated during the period 1970 to 1976.

It was a challenge as well as an opportunity for the Left Front Government. But with the active backing of the People of the State, the Government accepted the challenge and boldly faced it. For the Government, it was not a bed of roses. It had to work under severe limitations, the most important among them being the limitation imposed by the Constitution of India. It is sufficient to mention that the Constitution of India is federal in form but unitary in content. In this set-up financial and all other vital powers are concentrated in the Centre. As a result, the States have duties and responsibilities, but no equivalent powers. At every stage and in every sphere, the States' dependence upon the Centre is more or less complete. Whatever little powers were provided in the Constitution by the Constiution-makers these have been snatched away during the last 30 years through directives, Acts of Parliament, changes in the Constitution etc. On the plea of a "Strong Centre" the previous regime at the Centre has systematically weakened the States and thus undermined the basic principle of a Federal Structure.

States cannot progress without effecting fundamental changes in the Centre-State relationship, particularly in the sphere of financial relationship. The Left Front Government prepared a document in 1978 embodying its considered opinion on the issue of restructuring Centre-State relationship in regard to delegation of more financial and other powers to the States. This document has given rise to debates in the country and the response from many State Governments and academic circles is encouraging. We hope, West Bengal Government's stand on this issue will generate a national debate which will, ultimately, force the Centre to reconsider its previous rigid stand.

But the Left Front Government did not sit idle during the past 3 years hoping for the centre's change of attitude. With its own limited power, and with active cooperation of the people, the State Government geared up its administration and implemented appreciably quite a number of important items embodied in the 36 Point Programme.

IMPORTANT ACHIEVEMENTS

Restoration of the Rule of Law and Democracy :

The Left Front Government realised that **State's progress towards better** future is impossible without complete restoration of democracy and rule of law, which were destroyed by the previous regime.

The Left Front in its 36 Point Programme promised that if voted to power it would ask the Centre to take steps to fully restore and extend basic freedom and democratic rights, repeal MISA and release all categories of political prisoners—convicted, under-trial or detained without trial, withdraw warrants of arrest against workers of political parties and mass organisations, and annul all other repressive laws enacted before or during the Emergency.

The Left Front declared that it would also take necessary steps to restore democracy on its own.

This promise has been fulfilled. The Left Front in its first cabinet meeting, resolved to take a number of steps in this regard. All the persons detained under MISA were freed. The State Government also took the crucial decision to release, irrespective of political affiliations, all categories of political prisoners, convicts, undertrials or detained without trial.

The Left Front Government has been alleged to have withdrawn hundreds of criminal cases. Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu himself replied to this allegation : "This was part of an amnesty, we have decided upon. It was part of our election manifesto. We wanted to give a fresh chance. Cases were withdrawn against Congressmen also. More than 1,700 of them were released. The amnesty is not, however, for all time to come and we are definitely not withdrawing any case started since we took over th Government" (From the speech of the Chi Minister Shri Jyoti Basu at the conferenc of Governors and Chief Ministers in Ne Delhi on April 8, 1980).

Democratic rights trampled underfoot b the previous regime have been complete restored by the Left Front. Freedom speech, freedom of writing, freedom to for associations and freedom of movement a fully secure under the Left Front Governmen Democratic rights are now being enjoye not only by the Left parties, but als by the parties opposed to the Government.

It should be noted that the Left Front an the Government led by it did not take an vindictive attitude towards the leaders an members of the party who were responsib for unleashing a reign of terror througho the State during the period between 197 and 1976. Not a single member of this par was detained without trial under MIS (when MISA was still there in the statu book).

Rights and status of the mass organisatio of workers, kisans, students, teachers, gover ment employees, municipal and panchay employees are now fully honoured. Sta Police personnel have been given democrat rights to form their own unions and ventila their grievances through those. The Sta Government has also given recognition Policemen's Unions.

Let us recollect the happenings in son other States during 1979. In these Stat the aggrieved Police personnel had be victims of repressive measures by the gover ment. CRP and BSF were used agai the State Police Forces, and, Army and t BSF against the CRP and the CIS Hundreds of State police, CISF & C personnel were victimised.

But in West Bengal the picture is complet

different. Police personnel in our State have also their grievances and demands. But regular contacts between the Government and their Unions are maintained and their grievances routed through the Unions are looked into. While assuring their democratic rights to form unions, they were demanded of a changed outlook, disciplined behaviour and service to people. This is, no doubt, significant achievement of the Left Front Government.

Restoration of democratic rights has led to the rapid growth and expansion of democratic movements in the State. This is a healthy development which minimises the scope of revival of authoritarian forces.

Under Left Front Government, the party or parties opposed to the Government also enjoy full democratic rights to freely express their views and criticise the government. We are confident that if any organisation tries in a planned manner to misuse these democratic rights for political gains, the People of the State who are now conscious of their rights will come forward to help the government to frustrate the design of those elements.

The Left Front Government, from its very inception, has been representing to the Centre to rescind the 38th to 42nd amendments to the Constitution of India, amend articles 352 and 356 of the Constitution to prevent promulgation of Emergency except in the case of foreign aggression and misuse of such power to impose President's Rule in States.

Janata Government took certain partial and half hearted steps in this regard which did not help in complete dismantling of the authoritarian structure built up by the previous regime. Articles 352 and 356 of the Constitution empowering the President (i.e. the Central Government) to impose internal emergency and President's Rule in a State still remain. 42nd amendment to the Constitution has not been repealed; some articles have either been deleted or amended. Some of the articles inserted in the 42nd amendment have remained intact.

Left Front Members in the Assembly and in Parliament have been consistently exposing the authoritarian forces in their sinister move to curb the democratic rights of the people.

Left Front Government and Rural West Bengal :

Left Front Government has proposed to fix the State's Plan out-lay for 1980-81 at Rs. 580 crores, that is at a level exactly Rs. 100 crores higher than what had been planned for the year 1979-80. To quote Finance Minister Dr. Ashok Mitra from his Budget Statement 1980-81 : "With this order of out-lay, we would succeed in raising the size of the annual developmental expenditure in the State by more than 250 per cent between 1976-77 and 1980-81. This is the highest increase in plan expenditure registered by any State in the country during this period.

"An integral component of this process is the shift in emphasis in favour of rural development, particularly for improving as quickly as possible, the conditions of the poorer sections of the rural community".

Rural thrust in the development strategy of the Left Front Government is understandable.

75 per cent of West Bengal's population live in the rural areas. Agriculture and allied occupations absorb about 60 per cent of the total workers. According to 1971 census there were 39.6 lakh cultivators and 32.7 lakhs of agricultural labourers in the State in that year. Most of agricultural labourers are either landless or own less than one acre of land. Between 1961 and 1971, number of agricultural labourers have increased from 17.72 lakhs to 32.7 lakhs ; but during the

same period number of cultivators have declined from 44.59 lakhs to 39.55 lakhs. These data are revealing. During this decade a large number of cultivators got alienated from land which they were used to cultivate and thus inflated the army of agricultural labourers.

Even after 32 years of independence and 29 years of planning, overwhelming majority of the cultivators continue to remain in abject poverty. Not only they are poor, their poverty and distress have grown and are growing year after year. According to the Reserve Bank of India survey, poorest 20 per cent of West Bengal's rural families had either no assets at all or had assets amounting to less Rs. 1,000 in 1971, whereas richest 10 per cent of the rural families during the same year owned more than 60 per cent of the total rural assets. Position has worsened after 1971. Only 6 per cent of the cultivators own about 30 per cent of the cultivable land, whereas large sections of the farm labourers possess no land at all.

64.01 per cent of the rural population in West Bengal in 1972-73 lived below poverty. (Lok Sabha : answer to a question ; dt. 12/3/1980). Now this figure is not less than 75 per cent.

The previous governments had spent crores of rupees on account of rural development. Some developments took place in some areas in some districts. But the fruits of these developments did not reach the have-nots in the rural areas. These developments mainly benefitted the already affluent sections of the rural population who became richer, but poor became poorer. Development strategy of the previous regimes not only widened the gulf between the rich and poor, it also generated regional imbalance in economic development. Even the limited aim of land reform set in the first Five Year Plan, namely distribution of vested land among the landless labourers and poor peasants, remain unfulfilled. Previous Government's land reform measures have created a new type of rural elite.

The Panchayat election in 1978 has given a big jolt to the rural vested interests.

The Left Front Government realised that, without progressive change in the rural set-up, the State cannot advance forward. Our industry cannot forge ahead withou developing the internal market; for developing the internal market it is necessary to raise the purchasing power of the poorest sections of the rural population. Agricultural production cannot be raised on a sustained basis without generation of additional employmen opportunities on a massive scale. It is als necessary to raise the standard of living o the poorest sections of the rural population namely, the agricultural labourers, bargadars and small and marginal farmers.

The Left Front Government also strongl felt that, it is not sufficient to invest mor money for developmental purposes. It i also necessary to radically change the patter and priority of investment, with a view t ensure that the fruits of development reac the poorest sections of the rural populatio And the three-tier Panchayat System ha now become the media through which th benefit of development is reaching the vas masses of the rural population. Panchaya System is also the media through whic people are being drawn into the develop mental process. Panchayat System is work ing as a link between the Administration an the People.

LAND REFORM :

Land reforms have been given top priorit by the Left Front Government. These re forms are essential to uplift the status of th

villagers and improve their economic position.

Left Front in its 36 Point Programme has made the following proposals :–

"Acquisition and distribution of surplus and benami land to the landless poor peasants and agricultural labourers free of cost. Radical changes in the land reforms laws to do away with all forms of concentration of land-holdings and to give substantial relief to bargadars and landless peasants and agricultural labourers.

"To give relief to peasants, outstanding loans incurred by them to be written off. Fresh allocation of credit on nominal interest and on easy terms to them ; arrangement for credit on periodical basis, effective deterrent steps against hoarders.

"Exemption of rent for all land-holders owning upto five acres. Relaxation of rent in irrigated and non-irrigated lands and lowering of rent on the basis of assessment of quality of land.

"Abolition of multi-point taxes on land-holders and introduction of one point agricultural income tax fixed on a rational basis.

"Provision of round-the-year work for landless workers and living wages for them. Raising of their minimum wages from the present prescribed level. Steps to ensure minimum wages.

"Supply of seeds, manure, fertilisers, agricultural implements, etc., on reasonable and subsidised rates, particularly to poor and landless peasants.

"Effective improvement of irrigation work and schemes".

The above promises made by the Left Front in its 36 Point are being fulfilled step by step.

West Bengal's Land and Land Utilisation Minister Shri Benoy Chowdhury in a radio broadcast has given very useful upto-date data on the pattern of distribution of the workers in West Bengal dependent predominantly upon agriculture.

These data are : About 65 lakh families in West Bengal are directly dependent upon agriculture, out of whom about 23 lakh families are landless agricultural labourers. 25 lakh families own less than $7\frac{1}{2}$ bighas of land per family and most of them are bargadars. 9.5 lakh families have holdings (per family) between 7.5 and 15 bighas of land and they can be described as small peasants. The holding of 5.5 lakh families is between 15 and 30 bighas and they can be called middle peasants. Number of families owning more than 30 bighas of land are about 2 lakhs.

Left Front Government's Land Reforms policy is aimed at improving the economic position of about 63 lakh families in West Bengal directly dependent upon agriculture. Let us see how this policy is being implemented.

DISTRIBUTION OF VESTED LAND :

During the emergency period, at a particular point of time under certain constraints, the district officers declared all the lands available for distribution as having been distributed. They knew it to be incorrect. The beneficiaries who did not get the land knew it to be incorrect. The authorities who directed the distribution within absurd time limit also knew it to be incorrect.

"The moment of truth arrived when we published some figures of available vested land for the use of the members of the Panchayat Raj institutions for distribution among the village poor. Inconsistencies surfaced openly. We have now been able to sort out to a large extent these figures but element of doubt still persists". (Government of West Bengal—Land Reforms in West Bengal, Statistical Report-II; 1979).

LAND DISTRIBUTION UPTO JUNE, 1979

(Areas in acres)

– Total Agricultural Lands vested	11,17,135.94
– Area of vested land hit by injunction	1,70,010.05
– Area of vested land available for distribution	9,47,125.89
– Area of vested land distributed	6,15,503.87
– Area of land yet to be distributed	3,31,622.02

Who are the Beneficiaries?

Total number of beneficiaries	9,75,032
of which	
Scheduled Castes	3,57,168
Scheduled Tribes	1,92,132

(**Source :** Government of West Bengal Land Reforms in West Bengal, 1979)

The table above indicates marked progress in regard to distribution of vested land. The table also shows that the main beneficiaries are the members of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes overwhelming majority of whom are landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

But the Left Front Government is not satisfied with the progress. During the previous regime vested lands were either not distributed at all or distributed in a partisan manner.

During the Second United Front regime the Kisan Sabha had distributed about 3 lakh acres of land to the landless poor peasants and agricultural labourers. But in the subsequent period, under the Congress regime a large number of assignees of government vested land were deprived of their little possession. The previous regime even went to the extent of enacting legislations for legalising the benami transfer of land which took place upto 1969. As a result of which the opportunity for distribution of vested land among the landless was virtually lost.

The Left Front Government has decided to accelerate the tempo of land distribution. Henceforth the Panchayats will be the main vehicle of land distribution. This new decision will go a long way in distribution of vested lands among the really needy persons.

Side by side, the drive to unearth benami lands is continuing and will continue. In the quest for locating benami lands from the month of June to November, 1977, 26573 acres of land have vested in the Government under Zamindari Acquisition Act. Under the Land Reforms Laws 9764 acres have vested in the Government during the same period.

Protecting the Interests of Bargadars, Small and Marginal Farmers :

In September 1977 West Bengal Land Reforms Act were suitably amended to protect the interests of the bargadars and as well as give relief to the small land-holders. The salient features of the amended Act is as follows :-

A considerable part of cultivable land in this State is under the share-cropping system. The number of bargadars would amount to between 30 and 35 lakhs. To eliminate eviction of share-croppers, a clause has been inserted to sub-section 8 (dealing with the definition of "personal cultivation") of the section 2 of West Bengal Land Reforms Act. This clause provides that those who want to cultivate the land themselves will have to spend the greater part of the year living on the land themselves or with their families. Another clause has been inserted to the effect that those who cultivate the land themselves will have to consider the income from that

land as their principal source of income. A further revision in the Act states that if anyone tries to evict any share-cropper illegally, he will be held responsible under the law and will be prosecuted accordingly.

To enforce and conserve the rights of the share-croppers, it is important that their names find their place in the land records. In the matter of facilitating the work of recording the names of the share-croppers, the necessary amendments of the law have been made with the result that if the share-croppers do not receive their receipts for the produce handed over to the owners of the lands, the owner will be sentenced to imprisonment for 6 months or compelled to pay a fine of Rs. 1,000 or they may be liable to imprisonment and fine simultaneously. The receipt which the share-cropper will receive will constitute the principal instrument for the recognition of his rights.

To help the peasants, specially the small raiyats, exemption from land revenue has been given to all those holding 4 acres of agricultural land on a family basis in irrigated areas. In other areas also the land revenue has been lowered. In irrigated areas the rate is $1\frac{1}{2}$ times what was charged in 1969 (at that time it was 3 times that amount), and in non-irrigated areas the rate will be same as that of 1969 (at that time it was double the amount). This is, of course, an interim measure to give immediate relief to the peasants, pending enactment of a comprehensive legislation eliminating the feudal rent system.

LANDHOLDING ACT, 1979 :

The landholding Bill, 1979 recently passed by the Left Front Government is another bold step towards radical land reforms. West Bengal is the first State in the country which has enacted this type of legislation. By this legislation, the feudal rent system is being replaced by a more rational and equitable system of levy on landholding based on fertility of soil, type of crop produced, proximity to the marketing centre and other advantages of the landholding.

Landholdings upto a value of Rs. 50,000/- are exempted. Thus all the small and marginal holdings numbering about 45 lakhs out of a total 52 lakhs of holdings will be exempted from any levy. The remaining 7 lakhs will have to pay levy on a progressively higher rate for higher slabs. The wealth accumulated by the richer section of the peasantry will thus be ploughed back for national development.

It is to be noted that the Bill passed by the West Bengal Legislative Assembly a couple of months ago is yet to receive the clearance from the Centre.

MOVE ABOUT SHARE-CROPPERS :

On the 7th November, 1977 the Chief Minister declared that in the matter of harvesting the actual peasant or tiller would be able to reap the harvest and to ensure this the Government was determined to take all necessary measures. Referring to the Government's policy on sharing of crops, it was clearly stated that those share-croppers who had cultivated the land at their own cost would receive $\frac{3}{4}$ of produce, whereas in those cases where the share-croppers had merely provided the labour and the owner of the land had borne the actual expenses the produce would be shared 50 : 50.

Left Front Government has repeatedly instructed police and administration to remain strictly neutral in the land dispute. They must be strictly guided by laws and rules and guidelines framed therein. They will have to help the share-croppers to get the due

share of the produce. They must not side with the vested interests.

The Government's policy in this regard has worked well in the past three years. The actual tillers were able to take their produce home and harvesting took place in a relatively tranquil atmosphere with only sporadic incidents reported from here and there. The Panchayats were of immense help in settlement of the disputes relating to sharing of produce. This is a radical departure from the repressive and partisan policies used by the previous regime.

OPERATION BARGA :

In recording the names of Bargadars a new style of operation was introduced in September 1978 under the name of "Operation Barga". Group meetings were organised near the places of residence of bargadars, involving the Panchayat Samities, peasants' organisations, the bargadars, and the concerned officials in order to convince the bargadars about the benefits of recording. After the introduction of "Operation Barga", the average rate of recording increased significantly, by about 300 per cent, attaining a figure of 32,000 recordings per month by January, 1979. The total number of bargadars as recorded upto October 1979 has reached 7.5 lakhs. According to latest figures number of recorded bargadars stood, as on 31st December, 1979 at 7,85,117. This is no small success.

The most important factor in Left Front Government's total package programme for rural transformation is "Operation Barga". The operation encouraged share-croppers to register themselves so that the legal rights to the land they cultivate year in and year out could be firmly established.

But while implementing the "Operation Barga" there were some misunderstandings in the minds of some individuals.

Finance Minister Dr. Ashok Mitra in his budget statement for 1980-81 (on 27th February, 1980) observed : At the same time however, in the case of some indigent individuals who happen to be owners of small plots of land and who, on account of circumstances, are unable to cultivate their lands and have to go for share-cropping arrangements, "Operation Barga" might lead to a depletion in the market value of the lands they continue to own legally. These category of owners often include primary teachers, employees and professional people who had to move away from villages, and widows who obviously cannot cultivate on their own.

To obviate their difficulties, the Government has decided to set up a land transaction agency ; a sum of rupees 50 lakhs is being initially placed at its disposal in the budget for 1980-81. Small land-holders who do not own more than one hectare of irrigated land and 1.5 hectares of un-irrigated land, and whose annual earnings from all other sources do not exceed Rs. 3,000, would be welcome to dispose of their land at market prices prevailing on some bench mark period. The Government hope, with the setting up of this agency much of the occasional misunderstandings that have cropped up in the implementation of "Operation Barga" will disappear.

Other Schemes for Share-Croppers, Agricultural Labourers and Marginal Farmers :

"One of the major impediments in the recording of the homeless, and usually the poorest, Bargadar is the very real threat of

being thrown out of their hovels built on the plots of jotedars and money-lenders. To protect the interest of these and other homeless, the State Government has decided to record them as raiyats or non-agricultural tenants in respect of their homestead plots, and the Gram Panchayats have been advised to render financial assistance to build or renovate their houses. Upto June 1979, approximately thirty thousand homeless persons have been recorded.

Along with the recording of bargadars and distribution of vested land to the landless and the marginal farmers, there is an accompanying need for the provision of credit to these poorer section. These needs can, in fact, become more acute in the event of a possible, organised back-lash by the rural rich. A special effort was therefore made by the State Government to convince the nationalised commercial banks to advance this credit. It was further decided that the entire burden of rate of interest on these loans would be subsidised by the State Government. The banks to begin with, agreed to cover a fraction of these poorer section and the Panchayats were therefore given the responsibility of sponsoring the more deserving ones. In this process, by August 1979, it became possible for about 59,000 recorded bargadars and assignees of vested land to get access to institutional finance. This is a small, but a very significant beginning. (Government of West Bengal : Economic Review, 1979-80).

According to latest reports, during 1979-80, "for the first time in the country", the banking sector could be pursuaded to agree to a special programme for advancing credit to nearly 50,000 share-croppers and assignees of vested lands under the scheme of differential rate of interest. The Government intends to expand the scheme further during 1980-81.

The previous government made tall promises to provide bank finances for the poorest sections of the rural population on easy terms, but it did nothing to fulfil those promises. Bulk of the Bank advances made to the agricultural sector had been grabbed by the rural rich. Left Front Government has been trying to reverse the trend and bring bank finances within the reach of the agricultural labourers, share-croppers and small and marginal farmers. This is also a radical departure from the past performance.

Another Praiseworthy Step of the Left Front Government :

Finance Minister Dr. Ashok Mitra has announced in his latest budget speech that a sum of rupees 50 lakhs has been earmarked in the 1980-81 budget to make a beginning with the proposed pension scheme for agricultural labourers and small farmers. The details of the scheme are being worked out and will be announced shortly. It is hoped that, with the initiation of this scheme, "which is the first of its kind in the country, a new chapter of social welfare will be ushered in West Bengal's country-side".

Agricultural Labourers and the Left Front Government :

"Labour in West Bengal, 1975", a publication of the Government of West Bengal, Department of Labour, made a special survey of the condition of the farm labourers in the State. The survey revealed a horrible picture of poverty, distress and unemployment. According to the survey, average daily earning of an agricultural labourer for agricultural operation was 35 paise only. In some districts like Bankura and Purulia it was even less. The survey also revealed that an agri-

cultural labourer in West Bengal remains without work for at least 7 months out of 12 months in a year. In 1974, the then Government fixed the minimum wage (on statutory basis) of an agricultural labourer at Rs. 8.10 per day. But according to the survey of the labour department, about 80 per cent of the agricultural labourers are not aware that their wages have been fixed at Rs. 8.10 per day and they will be receiving wages from the employers at the same old rate.

Crash Schemes of the previous regimes to generate additional employment opportunities crashed. Crores of rupees were wasted.

"Food For Work Programme" which is in operation since late 1977 should be assessed in the light of the programmes initiated by the previous regime. The earlier programmes ran into rough weather because no priorities were fixed and also because the bureaucrats were given the responsibility to execute the schemes. These bureaucrats were hand in glove with the vested interests who could successfully sabotage the schemes and fill their pockets.

The previous regime had no contacts with the people and at no stage people were associated with the execution of the schemes.

To-day the situation is radically different. The Left Front Government with the active association of the rural population through Panchayat System, has been successfully executing the three special rural development programmes, viz, Food for Work, Rural Work and Composite Rural Restoration.

Both in respect of employment generation and creation of productive assets the programmes were a massive success.

In agriculture, along with a massive production drive in the Rabi season of 1978-79, special programmes on rural work, Food for Work and Rural Restoration were undertaken in the construction of infrastructures, such as roads and minor irrigation facilities, and in the restoration of other rural assets affected by floods. The total number of additional mandays generated from these programmes was 566.3 lakhs in 1978-79, and this number is estimated to have reached approximately 700.0 lakhs by December 1979.

To put it concretely through execution of the programmes referred to above, about 10 lakhs of rural population employed or under employed, got additional employment for 4 months in 1978-79; in 1979-80, about 15 lakhs got employment for 4 months. This is a significant achievement of the Left Front Government. The figures furnished by the Central Government shew that employment generation in terms of mandays through execution of the programmes in West Bengal is the highest in the country.

The success of the above-mentioned three programmes in West Bengal cannot be properly assessed only in terms of employment generation.

It is important to consider, along with employment, the behaviour of wages of the agricultural labourers. The table below shows the results of two surveys conducted by the Labour Directorate in the agricultural wages, cash and money value of kind payments taken together, prevailing in the sowing seasons in the districts in 1976 and 1979 :

Wages in rupees
(Cash and Kind)

		1976	1979
Birbhum	...	6.01	6.47
Nadia	...	5.68	6.75
Hooghly	...	5.74	8.50
Jalpaiguri	...	7.19	6.80
West Dinajpur	...	4.79	5.75
Cooch Behar	...	6.01	6.57
24 Parganas	...	6.58	8.27

Source : Labour Directorate, Government of West Bengal.

It can be seen from the above table, average wage rate for agricultural labourers in every district has registered marked rise between 1976 and 1979. In two districts, namely Hooghly and 24 Parganas average wage rate in 1979 was slightly higher than the statutory minimum wage (8.10) fixed by the previous government in 1974. This is a remarkable achievement for which every citizen should be proud.

What are the secrets of success on this front? The Economic Review, 1979-80 circulated by the West Bengal Government has correctly come to the conclusion that "this improvement in the wage rate is as much a result of the additional production programmes undertaken in agriculture and in related spheres as of an increase in the bargaining power of the agricultural labourers. One of the factors responsible for this increase in bargaining power has been the involvement of the Panchayats, along with administrative machinery ; in protecting justified interests of the agricultural labourers. In addition, whatever definite measures are taken for recording the names of bargadars, distribution of the vested land among the poorest and recording of the homestead plots in favour of the landless, the rural poor as a group, and the agricultural labourers as a member of the same group, find more confidence in organising themselves for a fair wage for their work, e.g. there are reasons to believe, therefore, that the programmes undertaken on land reforms and increase in the bargaining strength of agricultural labourers have acted as mutually supporting forces in the implementation of the same basic policy on redistribution that the State Government intends to uphold".

Flood and Drought :

Left Front Government had many hurdles to cross. There were wide spread and devastating floods in 1978 and severe drought in 1979. This year also the State is under the grip of drought. But thanks to the massive relief operation undertaken, and successful execution of food for work programme there was no migration of rural labourers from the affected areas to Calcutta and other urban centres in search for jobs. This phenomenon was never witnessed during the previous regimes. For this credit should go not only to the Government, but also to the Government employees who worked round the clock, Panchayats and the people in general.

Finance Minister Dr. Ashok Mitra correctly observed in his budget speech, 1979-80 (on 27th February, 1979) : The entire economy of West Bengal was put to dismay by the floods. It will take the State quite a number of years to recover fully from the ravages caused by last year's deluge. And yet, alongside this story of misery and disaster, there is the other story of the heroic manner in which the people of this State mobilised themselves against the fury of the floods. Despite the enormity of the calamity, the fabric of economic life was restored with remarkable speed within a very short while nearly everywhere. No panicky exodus took place toward the metropolitan area. Epidemics were not allowed to break out. No profiteer could avail of the opportunity to raise prices of essential commodities. Under the leadership of the Panchayat bodies, political parties and mass organisations, villagers organised themselves to provide succour to the distressed and, subsequently, to take charge in the task of reconstruction.

Agricultural Production and Supply of Agricultural Inputs :

In the past three years the Left Front Government has taken a number of steps to break agricultural stagnation which is the legacy of the previous regime's misrule, to raise agricultural production through land reforms as well as stepping of the supply of vital inputs like irrigation facilities, fertilisers etc. These efforts have slowly but steadily started paying dividends.

The overall index of agricultural production in West Bengal was 105.10 in 1976-77, 125.21 in 1977-78 and 119.57 in 1978-79. Production in 1979-80 is expected to be not less than that of 1978-79. It can be seen that the overall index recorded a fall from 125.21 in 1977-78 to 119.57 in 1978-79 ; but compared to the year 1976-77, the last year of the rule of the previous government, the index was much higher in 1978-79.

Fall in production in 1978-79 was caused basically by the widespread devastation of the floods. The importance of floods is realised if the Kharif production of 1978-79 is considered and within that, the production of crops affected by the floods is compared with the production of those which were spared.

The harvesting of jute for example was just possible before the most serious phase of floods of the late September, and as a result the cultivated area, the production and productivity of jute—all showed a significant improvement in 1978-79 over the previous year. The production of two other Kharif crops, namely aman and aus rice was, however, badly affected, as can be seen from the fall in indices of cultivated area, production and productivity of these crops. Since rice occupies more than 70 per cent of the total cultivated area, and aman and aus rice taken together account for more than 85 per cent of the total rice production, the significant fall in production of the two crops could have by itself, seriously pulled down the overall index of agricultural production.

Faced with this situation, the Government gave an all-out drive to step up production of rabi crops. The following steps were taken :–

Number of minikets distributed by the Government increased from 86,665 in 1977-78 to 17,45,700 in 1978-79. A decision was taken to distribute these minikets to the small and the marginal farmers and to give the responsibility of this distribution to the newly elected Panchayats.

Along with that, the consumption of fertilisers was noticeably increased from 1,16,633 tonnes in 1977-78 to 1,49,443 tonnes in 1978-79.

A significant number of deep tubewells, river lifts and shallow tubewells were damaged by floods :

Number of Deep Tubewells, Shallow Tubewells and River Lifts in West Bengal

	up to 1978-79		
	Deep Tube-wells	*River Lifts*	*Shallow Tube-wells*
Total	2,332	2,496	3,369
Damaged by Floods	992	1,254	1,045

Immediate steps were taken to repair and reactivate them. In addition 164 deep tube-wells and 2 river lifts were installed by the minor Irrigation Corporation.

The combined efforts of these and other efforts at the levels of the organisation and inputs, was to be seen in terms of a remarkable increase in the area of cultivation and the production of rabi and ensuing summer crops.

Index of production of boro rice, with 1971-72 as the base year, increased from 149.55 in 1977-78 to 212.24 in 1978-79.

There is a definite breakthrough in production of rabi crops, why only rabi crops, the agricultural production as whole is on the rise in West Bengal on a sustained basis.

Agricultural Production
(in thousand tonnes)

	1976–77	1977–78	1978–79
1. Cereals	7,102.3	8,636.0	7,775.6
2. Pulses	351.5	334.2	267.4
3. Total Food-Grains (1 +2)	7,453.8	8,970.2	8,043.0
4. Oilseeds	59.7	97.8	102.0
5. Fibres	3,657.6	3,718.3	4,382.0

Source : Govt. of West Bengal ; Economic Review, 1979-80 ; Statistical Tables.

Except pulses whose production has substantially declined between 1976-77 and 1978-79, production of all other foodgrains is higher in 1978-79 compared to 1976-77. Production of rabi crops like oilseeds and fibre has been rising on a sustained basis.

Economic Review, 1979-80 observes :

The successful aspect of the rabi programme has also indicated the importance of Panchayats in the organisation of rural planning. It is relevant in this context to refer to a recent survey on the Gram Panchayats conducted by the Development Planning Department, where it was found out that in the representative sample of hundred Gram Panchyats surveyed, majority of Panchayat members came from poorer sections in villages. The organisational experience and findings of the survey confirm the need for involving the panchayats, as the elected representatives of the rural poor, increasingly in the programmes of rural development meant to be initiated by the poor.

These basic considerations on Land Reforms technology, marketing and organisation are already finding their place in the approach of the State Government to rural planning.

Agriculture—

Two other Important Decisions :

1. Left Front Government adopted a limited scheme with effect from kharif season of 1979-80 for the insurance of the aman paddy crop in collaboration with the Jute Corporation of India. The results are more encouraging and on the basis of the experience gained in 1979-80, crop insurance on an extended scale in respect of both aman, paddy and potato is proposed to be in 1980-81.

2. The Jute Growers in this State had to suffer heavily in 1979-80 because of a total break-down of the procurement operations of the Jute Corporation of India. Prices crashed, and the poor growers were left completely at the mercy of the pharias. Toward the later part of the last year the Government

initiated a scheme under which, as an experimental measure, a few selected panchayat bodies were appointed agents of the Jute Corporation for the purchase of raw jute directly from growers and not from middlemen. The scheme has been vetted by the Reserve Bank of India, and from the next season the State Government proposes to enlarge it and also utilise the jute manufacturing units, currently under the direct or indirect control of the Government, for purchases of jute directly from the growers. The Government is also proposing to utilise the services of the panchayat bodies for the purchase, as a measure of price support of potato and mustard seed.

The Left Front Government has taken a number of other steps to make credit available to the weaker sections on relatively easy terms. These include the exemption of loans for agricultural and other activities upto Rs. 15,000 from payment of stamp duty; similar exemptions have been granted on loans upto Rs. 6,500 for productive activities in other spheres.

It is necessary to mention the "Integrated Rural Development Programme". Unlike in other States this programme is being implemented in West Bengal by the panchayat bodies with emphasis on community or group schemes for the economically vulnerable sections. The Government has persuaded the banks to offer loans directly to the panchayats for meeting a portion of the loss involved in executing the community schemes, and the momentum of work under the programme is gradually picking up.

PANCHAYAT SYSTEM:

The previous government did not hold any panchayat elections for a decade and a half. Between 1958 and 1964 panchayat institutions were built up in West Bengal, and since then no panchayat elections took place. The previous government repudiated the West Bengal Panchayat Act 1957 and the West Bengal Zila Parishad Act 1963 and brought in a new measure the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1973. The new measure was considered sufficient excuse for the Congress Government not to hold any Panchayat elections throughout the years.

The Left Front Government, immediately after assuming power, decided to hold elections without delay.

On June 4, 1978 about 25 million voters of rural West Bengal exercised their franchise to elect 56,000 panchayat representatives to the new three-tier panchayat bodies. In many ways this was a unique event through a process of direct rural election on party basis with political symbols. The clea mandate at once put the new three-tie panchayat bodies on the threshold of a new choice. Decentralisation of powers fo socio-economic changes in rural areas.

In this election the leftist parties belongin to the Left Front won 67 per cent of th seats. The Left Front thus received its secon massive mandate from the rural poor.

A recent study in this unique panchaya elections made by the National Institute o Rural Development (Government of India) Hyderabad, has highlighted many interestin facets of socio-political structure of the State The study shows a high degree of politica awareness of rural voters with practicall no influence of caste in its socio-economi matrix. The study has noted the emergenc of a new, youthful, literate, rural leadershi in West Bengal.

The panchayats have already been given large number of programmes and schemes for execution. The schemes and programmes assigned up-to-date include: Rural Works Programme; Food for Work Programme; Composite Scheme for Rural Reconstruction; Control and management of khas vested tanks; Integrated Rural Development Programme; Special Programme for construction of Primary School Buildings ('B' & 'C' type); Programme for Distribution of Nationalised Text Books; Functions of Land Reforms Advisory Committee at the block level; Rural Housing Scheme for Landless Labourers; Rural Water Supply; Scheme for Unemployment Assistance; Special Nutrition Programme; Programme for Development of North Bengal; Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project in Jhargram Sub-Division of Midnapur District.

More programmes and schemes will be assigned step by step.

Amount of money sanctioned for various programmes and schemes other than Food for Work Programme, Rural Work Programme and Rural Restoration Programme during 1978-79 and 1979-80 amounted to Rs. 2556.79 lakhs.

Funds allotted to different programme under Food for Work Programme during 1978-79 was of the order of Rs. 3696.65 lakhs. This allotment was stepped up during 1979-80. Total amount of wheat allotted under three programmes in 1978-79 was 1.5 lakh tonnes. Financial devolution to panchayat institutions for execution of various development projects will rise step by step. The panchayat authorities have full freedom to execute the projects in any way they like without any outside interference.

For speedy and effective implementation of socio-economic programme, participation of beneficiaries is essential. The three-tier panchayat bodies under the new leadership have been able to enlist support and co-operation of rural people in the implementation of various programmes. In the case of panchayats committed to rural development rigid procedures and rules will be hindrance than help although they have to work within a certain framework and remain accountable to the people. The three-tier panchayat bodies are flexible enough and there is some scope for innovation in the style of its functioning.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee on panchayat institutions is the highest policy-making body in the State with the Chief Minister as its Chairman. A 3-man official committee with the additional Chief Secretary as its chairman was asked to submit a report on funds and personnel to be transferred to the three-tier panchayat bodies. The report submitted on 30.5.79 was taken into consideration by the Government.

A massive training programme for about 16,000 panchayat functionaries has been completed in 1979-80, and the Government is confident that the panchayat bodies would be increasingly better equipped to assume the fullest responsibility for the tasks they are being called upon to perform.

INDUSTRY: Towards Diversification:

West Bengal inherited a shattered industrial economy from the previous government. During S. S. Roy regime, not a single new industrial project worth the name came into existence in West Bengal. The old industries, namely jute, engineering and tea, were victims of massive man-made sickness. Industries fell sick, but not the industrialists. Jute barons and tea magnates amassed huge fortunes at the cost of the industries, workers

and employees and the farmers. But these fortunes were not ploughed back to the old industries but diverted to other industries where profit is easy and return is quick. As a result, hundreds of large, medium and small industrial establishments closed their shutters, rendering thousands of workers and employees jobless. It is not accidental that factory employment in West Bengal fell from 8.80 lakhs in 1965 to 8.35 lakhs in 1976.

Revival of the shattered economy was an uphill task. There were other problems also. Large scale industry is a central subject included in the Union List. Not the State Government, but the Central Government issues industrial licences and letters of intent. A State Government can provide infra-structural facilities only. A State Government on its own cannot take over a closed or sick industrial unit. There are certain limitations of Industrial (Development and Regulation) Act from the point of view of the State Government. Under this Act the State Government does not have, for example, the power to take over a sick unit on its own. It can only urge the Centre in this matter and does not have the power of a prior investigation while recommending the takeover. It is only after the takeover and at the discretion of the Centre, can the State Government assume supervisory power in financial and managerial matters. More important, the Act also precludes taking over any unit with less than 500 employees and fixed assets of valuation of less than Rs. 1 crore, although it is these smaller units that very often look up to the State Government for help.

Development of small-scale units is the exclusive jurisdiction of the State. Here also there are hurdles. Small-scale units are completely dependent upon the Centre for supply of vital raw materials, like iron, steel, copper, aluminium, etc.

Left Front Government's Industrial Policy Resolution :

Left Front Government is guided by its industrial policy resolution adopted in 1978. Here are some salient features of the said resolution :–

"The major goals of the Left Front Government over a long run should be : (a) reversal of the trend towards industrial stagnation, (b) arresting the growth of unemployment and providing for increased employment in the industrial as well as agricultural section, (c). encouraging the growth of small and cottage industries, (d) lessening the strangle hold of the monopoly houses and multinational firms on the economy of the State, (e) encouragement of indigenous technology and industrial self-reliance, (f) the gradual expansion of the public sector and (g) increasing the control of the actual producers that is, the workers, over the industrial sector".

Needless to say, it is a long-term strategy to be implemented step by step.

The resolution continues : "The different goals mentioned above are inter-connected. The reversal of the tendency towards industrial stagnation and the active expansion of industrial employment require that the State Government shall not think in terms of a mere revival of old industries substantially under old forms of management".

"One simple policy prescription follows from the above in the case of all sick units, proposals for re-opening should be considered if these are found viable under normal conditions of demand........... Representatives of workers must invariably be associated with schemes and plans for reviving sick units".

"The constraints under which a State Government has to operate under the constitutional arrangements cannot but affect industrial policy prescriptions too. It is thus necessary to reiterate here the Left Front's demand for a major modification in the allocation of powers between the Centre and the States in such matters as industrial licensing, the regulation of industries and arrangements concerning institutional finance. Industrial (Development and Regulation) Act must be suitably amended so as to enable the State Governments assume powers to investigate into the affairs of individual industrial units".

"For effective redress of the problem of regional imbalances in industrial growth, it is important that the Central Government is urged upon to accept the three-fold principle of (a) the equalization of prices of all industrial raw materials throughout the country, (b) the equalization of freight for these materials for all parts of the country, and (c) state-wise distribution of all industrial raw materials on the basis of actual requirement".

"One major reason for the industrial setback in West Bengal in the more recent period is the policy pursued by the national financial institutions. This policy has to be reversed ....".

Achievements in the Industrial Sphere:

During the last 3 years, the Left Front Government, without doubt has taken a number of concrete steps to revive the stagnant industrial economy.

By invoking the Industries Act (Development and Regulation), the Left Front Government on its own initiative has moved the Centre to take over a number of Units in jute, engineering and drugs and pharmaceutical industries and have gained control in the management of these units. Total number of take-over units is 29, and number of workers employed in these units stand at 28,267, which means, more than 28 thousand workers have got employment in the take-over units. This is not a small achievement.

It is necessary to mention here that most of the take-over units have started showing healthy production trends. Some of the units are making profits also.

During the years 1977 and 1978, through the intervention of the State Government it was possible to re-open 113 closed factories employing 12,307 workers.

The innovations carried out at the State level for the revival of sick and closed units are unprecedented in any state in the country.

There has been in recent years a significant increase in the number of units assisted by West Bengal Development Corporation. Number of units assisted increased from 64 in 1976-77 to 71 in 1978-79. Amount of assistance in the form of incentive increased from Rs. 138.75 lakhs in 1976-77 to Rs. 299.93 lakhs in 1978-79 ; other type of assistance which amounted to Rs. 541.15 lakhs in 1976-77, increased to Rs. 732.70 in 1978-79.

Remarkable Performance by Small Units:

In comparison with the organised large and medium scale sectors, the trends are remarkably more encouraging in cottage and small-scale industries.

Total number of small-scale industrial units registered with the Directorate of Cottage and Small-scale Industries, was 5,649 in 1976-77; it increased to 10.944 in 1978-79.

Increase in employment is more spectacular from 40,375 in 1976-77 to 80,143 in 1978-79 or about 100 per cent rise in three years.

For promotion and development of small scale industries, West Bengal Small-Scale Industries Corporation had, in 1978-79, supplied 9,926 tonnes of Iron & Steel (in 1976-77 it was 5,138 tonnes), 71,110 tonnes of hard and Breeze Coke (in 1976-77 it was 36,502 tonnes), and 4,829 tonnes of parafin wax (in 1977-78 it was 1,140 tonnes—figures for 1976-77 are not available).

Total production of handloom cloth in West Bengal which was 207.0 million metres in 1976-77, increased to 250.0 million metres in 1978-79. Production of handloom cloth by the cooperative societies in West Bengal increased from 66.2 million metres in 1976-77 to 84.8 million metres in 1978-79.

West Bengal is deficit in yarn production. In 1978-79, as against the total requirement of 330.6 lakh kg. of handloom yarn, the local spinning mills could supply 65.1 lakh kg. only. To meet this situation, West Bengal Handloom and Powerloom Development Corporation and Handloom Apex Society have started distribution of yarn. These two organisations supplied 1,784 bales of yarn (up to 405 count) in 1976-77, 3,037 bales in 1977-78 and 3,221 bales in 1978-79.

Undoubtedly, a major breakthrough has been made by the Left Front Government in the cottage and small-scale sectors. But even now problems remain and the government is trying its best to tackle the problem.

Production of certain items like coal, iron and steel, jute goods and certain categories of engineering goods is not picking up. But not the West Bengal State Government, the Central Government is responsible f this state of affairs.

Industrial Licensing :

No. of industrial licences and letters intent granted to West Bengal by the Cent has not only not increased but has falle significantly during the period 1976 ar 1979.

Here are the relevant figures :

No. of Industrial Licences granted t West Bengal

	Public Sector	*Private Sector*	*Total*
1976	5	51	56
1977	6	40	46
1978	2	23	25
1979	2	29	31

Source : Lok Sabha ; Answer to unstarr question no. 263, dt. 12th March, 198C

But the grant of Industrial Licences cann be the yardstick to assess the tempo of indu trial activities. Because large number applications remains pending and large nu ber has been or is being rejected on vario grounds.

The facts cited below will prove that th was no 'Capital Flight' from West Bengal.

Registration of New Joint Stock Companies in West Bengal

	Number	*Authorisec Capital (Rs. in lakhs*
1977	475	4,014
1978	503	4,352

Source : Government of West Beng

Economic Review; 1979-80; Statistical Talks.

In reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, dated 12th March, 1980, the Minister of State in the Ministry of industries stated the following : "During the period 1976-77, the department of Industrial Development permitted only two changes of locations", under the above-mentioned guideline from West Bengal to other States.

The guideline is: No transfer of fixed assets can occur or is permitted, without the approval of the State Government.

Obviously, the transfer of location does not mean transfer of fixed assets.

Hence the allegation of capital flight is baseless. The Left Front Government has definitely succeeded to make a dent in the industrial stagnation.

Diversification of Industries:

West Begnal's industrial base is narrow and hence vulnerable. The industry cannot progress and additional employment opportunities cannot be created on a sustained basis without diversification and creation of newer and newer industries. This and this alone can help expansion of the State's industrial base.

West Bengal has immense mineral resources which, if properly tapped, can go a long way towards diversification. The previous Congress Government did nothing in this regard. The high-powered Committee (Banerjee Committee) appointed by the Government of India in 1973 unequivocally recommended that a ship-building yard should be set up in Haldia. The Committee was firmly of the opinion that Haldia satisfies all the conditions for the establishment of a ship-building yard. But the report was suppressed by the then Central Government. The previous Congress Government in West Bengal did not take up the matter with the Central Government in right earnest. The Left Front Government is still pursuing the matter. Establishment of a ship-building yard will help the industrial growth (and also employment generation) not only of West Bengal, but of the whole eastern and north-eastern regions as well.

The Left Front Government has represented to the Centre more than once to set up a DDT manufacturing plant in West Bengal. Besides, the State Government has proposed some other chemical and chemical-based industrial units in the State.

The Left Front Government by its own efforts has made a beginning in regard to diversification.

Some units have already gone into stream and some are almost ready for commissioning. Mention may be made in this connection of the count dolomite project at Kalyani; the maleic acid hydride project at Kharagpur and the tungsten filament plant at Kalyani. The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation is promoting a slag cement-grinding unit at Purulia.

The Electronic Industry Development Corporation has already set up an industrial estate which will include facilities for research and development as well as testing. It has also initiated several projects in the Public or Joint Sector for the manufacture of such items as ferrites, thyristor-controlled modular drive system; hand tools, calculators, tele-communication equipment and television picture tubes.

Projects which have been implemented in 1978-79 include, Electronic Industrial Estate (Taratola), two electronic projects (Taratola), Rock Phosphate Project (Beldi, Purulia).

Projects which are expected to be commissioned very soon include, Walkie-Talkie sets Projects (Calcutta) ; Watch Assembly Unit (Kurseong) and Transfusion Project (Behala). During 1978-79 Districts Industries Centres have been set up in all the districts in the State ; under the umbrella of these centres it is proposed to provide the services and support required for integrated development of cottage and small scale industries.

The Left Front Government has made it in time for converting the letter of intent of the Haldia Petro-Chemical Complex into an industrial licence. The licence application was filed on 13th May, 1980 by the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation. The project is estimated to cost Rs. 428 crores since the size of the proposed complex has been extended to 1 lakh tonnes of naptha-based ethylene, from the original of 67,000 tonnes. The international tender bids have been opened and evaluated by the consultant firms.

It is an agro-based industry which will help agricultural development of the whole of eastern and north-eastern regions. When completed the main project and the downstream projects will provide employment to 66,000 people.

During the construction phase also thousands of people will get employment. This is the biggest project taken up by any State Government of the country.

Working Class and the Left Front Government:

The previous congress government during the period 1970-76, particularly during the emergency rule, took away all trade union rights, including the rights to strike and form unions. The reformist trade union leaders sacrificed the interests of the workers ar accepted the undeclared ban on strike Taking advantage of the congress govern ment's anti-working class attitude, the em ployers started large scale attack upon th workers. Thousands of workers were laic off or retrenched or thrown out of emplo ment in some form or other. There was virtu wage freeze and real earnings of the facto workers substantially eroded. Payment statutory bonus was reduced by half.

Immediately after assuming power, th Left Front Government fully restored all th trade union rights including the rights strike and form union. In the matter industrial disputes, the police and the ad ministration were directed to keep themselv strictly neutral. Their duty is to see that th industrial disputes are settled peacefully favour of the workers. Thus the practi in force for the last 30 years, when, in th matter of disputes between the workers ar the employers, the police and the admini tration invariably sided with the employe against the workers, was reversed. Poli was asked by the government to see that undesirable incidents take place and pea is maintained.

After complete restoration of trade unic rights there was a surge of trade unic activities. The existence of a friendly gover ment sympathetic to the cause of the worke resulted in tremendous advance of trac union movement and trade union struggl in the State during the period 1977 to 197 But there was in general complete peace the working class front. In this period the were some major struggles and the worke through the intervention of the State Gover ment, and also through their united effo were able to realise significant concessio from the employers. We should cite son facts in this regard.

In 1976, only 22 per cent of the workers received bonus in West Bengal. During 1977, '78 and '79 proportion of workers receiving statutory minimum bonus of 8.33 per cent substantially increased to 90-100 per cent. Employees of public sector undertakings do not come under the purview of the Bonus Act. But the Left Front Government has been giving these employees, ex-gratia of 8.33 per cent in place of bonus.

More than two lakhs of Jute Mill workers went on strike, which was of long duration and were able to realise some important demands. Per capita monthly earnings of each worker have increased to at least Rs. 470.10.

Three lakh engineering workers were preparing themselves for launching an indefinite strike. But after prolonged negotiations they were able to secure some benefits. Their monthly basic salary has increased by Rs. 52 to Rs. 56.

After prolonged strike by the workers of the printing presses and allied industries, there was an amicable settlement through the intervention of the State Government.

Similarly, the long-drawn strike of the bargemen of Calcutta Port was amicably settled through the intervention of the State Government.

During 1979 and early 1980, the colliery workers throughout the country including West Bengal, and the tea garden workers, tea factory workers and other categories of workers connected with the tea industry succeeded in gaining through united efforts, monetary and other concessions from the authorities and employers concerned.

Growth of Trade Union Movement :

Total membership of registered unions in the State rose significantly, by about 94 per cent between 1977 and 1979. More important, in 1979, this increase in membership was accompanied by a fall in the number of registered unions, suggesting an encouraging tendency towards the lessening of division in the movement.

	No. of Union registered	*Total membership*
1977	438	50,154
1978	577	60,523
1979	572	97,073

(Deptt. of Labour, Govt. of West Bengal)

Number of cases of strikes decreased from 206 in 1977 to 145 in 1979. But number of workers involved in the strikes, increased during the same period from 1.15 lakhs to 3.92 lakhs. It is not surprising. In 1979, workers of some large factories were forced to go on strike due to adament and rigid attitude of the management.

But number of cases of lock-outs have steadily declined from 191 in 1977 to 151 in 1979, and number of workers affected by these lockouts decline from 1.36 lakhs in 1977 to 1.08 lakhs in 1978 and to 0.52 lakhs in 1979. The policy of the Left Front Government and organised strength of the trade union movement—both are responsible for this significant improvement in the situation.

The Left Front Government has given full recognition to the right to strike by the workers and employees. But it is the considered view of the government that the strike should be resorted to as a last weapon when all other methods fail to achieve the desired result. It is the policy of the trade unions also.

Role of conciliation in the amicable settlement of industrial disputes is on the increase. This is evident from the following data :

Total number of men involved in strikes and lockouts increased from 2,23,000 in 1977

to 4,36,026 in 1979. During this period number of men involved in cases of termination settled through conciliation increased from 45.5 per cent to 87.7 per cent of the total. This is a notable success of the Left Front Government's labour policy.

Bonus and Need-based Minimum Wage :

Payment of Bonus Act is a Central Act. A State Government has no legal jurisdiction over this. But the State Government can certainly press its own view and make necessary recommendations to the Centre. Demand for payment of minimum 8.33 per cent bonus has now been accepted by the Central Government. But a comprehensive bonus legislation is yet to be initiated by the Central Government. Moreover the Central Government has rejected the demand of the Central Trade Unions and the Left Front Government to consider bonus as "deferred wage". The scope of the Bonus Act has not been extended to other categories of workers and employees. The Central Government's refusal to consider bonus as "deferred wage" and its decision to give some amount of money to the Railway and P. &. T. employees as "productivity-linked bonus" has been strongly resented by the Trade Unions and the Left Front Government. The Left Front Government wholeheartedly supports the demand of the Central Trade Union organisations to introduce a comprehensive Bonus Bill which should cover, besides the factory workers, other categories of workers and employees who continue to remain outside the purview of the Bonus Act. The Left Front also supports the demand that bonus should be considered as "deferred wage". Productivity-linked bonus is unacceptable.

The Left Front Government has been constantly demanding that the Central Government should without further delay, initiate legislations providing for need-based national minimum wage.

It is to be mentioned in this connection that during the 1950s the 15th Tripartite Labour Conference held in Simla (in which the then P. M. Late Nehru was also present) strongly recommended introduction of need-based national minimum wage.

The National Commission on Labour did not accept the concept of need-based national minimum wage. But the commission expressed the view that the question of fixation of need-based minimum wage on a regional basis should be favourably considered.

But the previous congress regime and the Janata regime turned down the demand on various pretexts. The Left Front Government is firm in its attitude. It will continue to press the Centre to accept this demand and initiate necessary legislations.

Industrial Disputes Act :

The Left Front Government has, recently suggested amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act (which is in the concurrent list of the Constitution) as applied to West Bengal.

The amendments proposed by the Left Front Government include (i) raising of the salary limit of the unionised workers from the present Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,600/-, the latter being the ceiling considered by the payment of Bonus Act ; (ii) to prevent the work stoppages in the industry in case of a dispute, the government should have powers to direct both the employers and employees to accept certain terms and conditions of employment ; (iii) requiring the employer not to close the industry and not to suspend/terminate anybody during the time when talks to settle the disputes are going on ; and (iv) acceptance of compulsory arbitration in certain cases.

The proposed amendments also include the procedure to be adopted in connection with the coming to a decision on the majority union.

The issue was recently discussed in the meeting of the State Labour Advisory Board. All the Central Trade Union Organisations supported in principle, the proposed amendments. But the employers' representatives in the board strongly opposed it. The State Government will take a final decision after another round of consultations.

Earnings and Employment :

So far the real earnings of the factory workers in West Bengal are concerned, the figures are available only up to 1978.

According to these figures there was a significant rise in the real annual earnings of the factory workers in West Bengal between 1976 and 1978 from Rs. 1,933 in 1976 to Rs. 2,070 in 1978.

In the industrial sector, there has been an increase in the average daily employment in the registered working factories from 826 thousands in 1977 to 839 thousands in 1978. This increase, to a significant extent, is in response to the steps taken by the Left Front Government to revive the sick and the closed units—a fact also reflected in the increase in number of working factories.

It is evident that, along with an increase in employment, there was also increase in the earnings (referred to above) of factory workers, and at a faster rate than the prices relevant for the industrial workers, so that the real earnings of workers after a long time showed improvement.

"This improvement in real earnings is related mostly to an increase in the organisational strength of the workers and also to policies taken by the State Government in the sphere of labour relations". (Government of West Bengal ; Economic Review 1979-80).

The Review continues : "In fact, in 1979, all the major strikes (already referred to) were settled through the intervention of the State Government. When these facts are combined with the recorded improvement in the real earnings of workers the character and effectiveness of the policy of the State Government in the sphere of labour relations come out significantly".

Employment through Employment Exchanges :

The State Government has been making efforts to increase the scope of employment directly in its own organisations as well as quasi-government and local bodies. This is evident from the table given below :–

Vacancies Notified and Placements Effected through Employment Exchanges

	Vacancies notified		*Placement effected*	
	1978-Jan. to Sept.	*1979-Jan. to Sept.*	*1979 same period*	*1979 same period*
a) Public				
1. Central Government	3,769	4,443	2,051	1,698
2. State Government	8,575	13,059	2,782	5,105
3. Quasi-Government & Local Government	9,751	8,639	2,800	3,662
b) Private Sector	13,078	8,744	4,769	1,518

Source : Government of West Bengal.

The table shows : (i) performance of the State Government is remarkable ; (2) performance of the quasi-government and local bodies is, on the whole satisfactory ; (3) but the Central Government and the Private sector are lagging behind.

Unemployment Assistance Scheme :

This is a unique scheme, which was introduced by the Left Front Government with effect from 1st April, 1978.

This scheme is pursuant to the provisions of Article 41 of the Constitution, which says that the Government shall make effective provision for public assistance in cases of unemployment. Since this is a directive principle of state policy, the Left Front Government thinks that the Central Government should agree to bear at least 50 per cent of the State's total expenditure on this account. The State Government has taken up the matter with the Centre.

The Unemployment Assistance Scheme entitles a person registered at the Employment Exchanges for at least 5 years, to receive Rs. 600 per annum as unemployment assistance. The recipient is required to work 100 days in a year for which an additional amount of Rs. 200 will be paid as remuneration.

Number of recipients of unemployment assistance which totalled 1,44,274 in 1978-79, increased to 2,11,485 in 1979-80. The scheme will cover 3,00,000 persons during the current year. It will cost the State exchequer nearly Rs. 18 crores this year.

Some other States also subsequently introduced scheme of almost similar nature. But the scheme is a novel innovation of the Left Front Government of West Bengal.

Other Sections of Employees & Workers :

The Left Front Government has started payment of dearness allowance to State Government employees at Central rates. The Pay Commission appointed by the State Government (which is expected to submit its financial report shortly) had made some interim recommendations in the matter in May 1978. The State Government sanctioned interim dearness allowance with effect from April 1978 for different categories of employees ; such allowance ranges from Rs. 25 to Rs. 60 per month. These allowances were also paid to such non-government employees including school and college teachers. Besides, chowkidars, dafadars, tehsildars etc. were given an interim relief of Rs. 10 per month. More than 7,60,000 families have been benefitted by this decision of the State Government, which meant an extra financial liability of Rs. 25 crores during the year 1978-79.

The Left Front had pledged in its 36 Point Programme to pay State Government employees dearness allowance at Central rates. To honour that pledge the Left Front Government took the historic steps to grant, with effect from April 1, 1979, the State Government employees dearness allowance at the same rates as are enjoyed by the employees of the Central Government.

With effect from April 1, 1979, employees of the non-government State-aided organisations, including teachers and others, who are covered by terms of references of the Pay Commission, are getting an additional dearness allowance.

Municipal bodies are being given subvention of 80 per cent of the additional expenditure needed for enabling them to grant to their employees additional benefits on the lines indicated above. These benefits are also applicable in the case of those public undertakings and statutory bodies under the

administrative control of the State Government whose employees have all along been getting dearness allowance at State Government rates and for whom no wage or pay committee has been set up.

With effect from November, 1, 1979 the Left Front Government has granted further increase in dearness allowance in view of the rise in the cost of living.

The State Government is awaiting the final report of the Pay Commission before deciding what further adjustments are called for in the conditions of work and pay of government employees. Very recently West Bengal Government in its historic announcement scrapped the "service conduct rules" of the Government employees which was a long standing demand of the employees' organisations. This is first of its kind in India.

In 1978-79, monthly pension received by retired government employees was raised by Rs. 15 per month, with effect from April 1, 1979. This was raised by another fifteen rupees uniformly.

Balance Sheet

Rise in emoluments (in rupees)

	Congress regime	*Left Front regime*
Primary School Teachers		
a)	262	329
b)	251	318
c)	231	298
Graduate Secondary School Teachers ...	308	400
Chowkidars	55	174
Dafadars ...	65	174
Government Employees		
a)	280.70	327.70
b)	391.70	438.70

Education, Culture & Health :

The Left Front Government, with the active assistance of teachers, students and non-teaching staff of the educational institutions has succeeded in restoring academic atmosphere in the institutions. The practice of mass-copying has stopped. Examinations are being held and results announced in time. Some of the students' hostels have been cleared of anti-social elements. In short, anarchy and chaos during the previous regime in the academic field have been put to an end by the Left Front Government.

Some universities have been taken over by the Government for a temporary period with a view to reconstitute the university bodies with increased number of elected representatives. After amendments of the relevant acts the universities will be restored to the democratically elected bodies.

The programme of opening new schools, primary as well as secondary, is proceeding according to schedules, and the objective continues to be the establishment of new primary schools to achieve a target of additional enrolment of 13.04 lakh children by 1982-83, which means that the entire estimated population of children in the age-group of 6-11 would be covered. By 1979-80, about 87 per cent of the school-going children for classes I to V has been enrolled.

Major Transformation :

Education upto the secondary stage is now free in West Bengal. With effect from 1st January, 1980 education has been made free up to class X. From January, 1981, students in West Bengal for classess XI and XII too would be exempted from the payment of any tuition fees.

For the first time since independence, both primary and secondary education will

thus be completely free in this State. The basic human right of receiving education will become a reality for millions of young children belonging to families of the poor and under-privileged.

Under the State Adult Education Programme, already a large number of adult education centres have been opened.

During 1978-79, plus two courses have been introduced in all non-government colleges as also in some government colleges. Three more polytechnics have been taken over by the State. The total number of full-fledged government institutions offering diploma courses in engineering, is now nineteen.

The Left Front Government has started use of Bengali language in administrative affairs. Use of Bengali as communication langnage between the Government and the people is on the increase.

Government has given due recognition to all other important languages including Nepali, Urdu and Hindi. An Urdu Academy has been set up to promote and develop Urdu culture.

The State Government has, in principle, decided to give recognition to Al-Chiki dialect of Santhali Languages.

The Left Front Government with an all-out drive against decadent culture, has been striving for the growth and development of healthy and progressive culture. It has taken some significant steps in this regard through the Information and Cultural Department. Any cultural movement true to our proud heritage is being encouraged, promoted and developed by the State Government through dramas, folk festivals, music functions, film festivals and seminars. Folk and Tribal Cultural Centres are patronised. Documentary and feature films are produced. The Folk Entertainment Branch also can boast of very useful work. The State Government with a view to save the Bengali Film Industry has drafted a bill providing for compulsory screening of Bengali Films in all the cinema houses in West Bengal atleast for 12 weeks in a year. The draft Bill is now under consideration of the Central Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

Water Supply :

The Left Front Government's objective is to provide drinking water on the pattern of one source for every 300 persons, and atleast one source for every village.

The creation of 4,905 rural water supply sources had earlier been planned for 1978-79; many sources have been created in this year ; the work is still in progress : the creation of another 4,115 sources was proposed for post-flood rehabilitation. Creation of 4,600 more sources were proposed under the accelerated water supply programme ; each of the schemes is being duly implemented.

Urban areas also have not been neglected. 29 water supply schemes are under implementation in the urban areas, some of which have already been implemented. The schemes include a large water supply scheme at Haldia at a cost of about Rs. 15 crores.

Youth Services :

The State Government has initiated a number of new programmes in the sphere of youth services and sports. New youth centres at sub-divisional and block levels are being established. Already 17 youth hostels have been established and some more are being added. The Union Government has agreed to establish the eastern wing of the National Institute of Sports at Calcutta. Additional

accommodation for 12,000 persons have been provided in the stadium at the Eden Gardens. The State Government has reorganised the schemes for the encouragement of the film industry in the State. The scheme for granting loans for film producers has been revised and grants are being provided instead. A colour film laboratory is being set up. Work on the proposed national theatre cine art complex has progressed satisfactorily.

Other Schemes & their Implementation:

The various projects under the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Programme continue to make progress. The development of the Salt Lake Township is proceeding according to schedule. The State Government has been able to reorganise the arrangements for the Hooghly Bridge Project, as a result of which the work is expected to proceed at a fast pace from now on.

The Government allotted Rs. 5 crores in the 1979-80 budget to enable it to undertake a thorough repair of municipal roads all over the State.

A comprehensive programme for organisational reforms has been launched in the sphere of local 'self-government'. The minimum voting age has been reduced from 21 to 18, electoral rolls are being prepared accordingly so that elections to the local bodies may be held as early as possible. The Calcutta Municipal Corporation Bill has been adopted by the West Bengal Legislature Assembly during its last session. After getting necessary clearance from relevant quarters, it will become an Act, which will guide the affairs of the Calcutta Corporation.

This new Act, when put into effect, will usher a new era of autonomy at the grass root level.

The Left Front Government has taken steps to build hundreds of low cost houses not only for its own employees, but also for other sections of poorer people.

The State Government has been successfully implementing various schemes for the development of backward regions including the Sundarbans and Darjeeling hill areas.

Power Supply :

Power supply position in the State continues to remain critical.

Between 1965 and 1976 there was very little addition to the installed capacity of West Bengal's power generation plants. And since 1970-71, creation of new installed capacity was negligible. Besides, the existing plants were very badly managed and there was no renovation, replacement or overhauling of the machinery according to schedule. Corruption was rampant in the State Electricity Board. Money earmarked for construction of power generation plants was diverted to unproductive purposes. Many schemes (like installation of gas turbines) sanctioned by the Centre in 1973 were not pursued by the previous Government.

Over a considerable period, there has been significant increase in installed capacity and per capita consumption of electricity in other industrial States. Between 1965-66 and 1975-76, per capita consumption of electricity declined from 114 units to 110 units in West Bengal. In the case of Maharashtra it increased from 106 to 178 units, in the case of Gujarat from 83 to 180 units, in the case of Karnataka from 55 to 142 units, and in the case of Tamil Nadu from 89 to 142 units.

It is important to note, however, that despite these additions to capacity and favourable position regarding per capita consumption, all these industrial States are also facing serious problems of deficit. The table given below is revealing :

Power-cuts imposed in some States :
(As on 1. 3. 1980)

Uttar Pradesh – Industries : 66.6% demand and energy cut. Major cities : Get supply for 6 hours a day.

Gujarat – 20-25 per cent power cut.

Maharashtra – 15-30 per cent power, and also peak period restriction—20-45 per cent.

Madhya Pradesh–20-30 per cent power-cut.

Tamil Nadu – 30 per cent on continuous and 40 per cent on non-continuous HT industries.

Orissa – 45-60 per cent power-cut.

West Bengal – 10-23.5 per cent on HT industries and also peak period restriction for consumers getting supply at 303 KV and above.

(Source : Lok Sabha : 10.3.1980)

The Left Front Government has been trying to tackle the problem on a war footing. It has taken short-term as well as long-term measures.

Special measures have been adopted in the State to expand the installed capacity as quickly as possible. An intensive schedule of installation of new units has been worked out and every attempt is being made for commissioning of the units on schedule. It should be noted that commissioning of the 3rd unit at Santaldih and the gas turbines have been completed.

Installed capacity of the West Bengal's Units has increased from 1,740.2 MV in 1976-77 to 1,865.2 MV in 1978-79.

The outlay on power has been considerably stepped up by the Government during the last 3 years. The outlay proposed for 1980-81 works out at Rs. 57.30 crores.

By 1979-80, the State Government has been able to electrify 12543 Mouzas. Electricity has been supplied to 19,968 shallow tubewells, 2519 deep tubewells and 817 river lifts. Besides, electricity has reached 385 health centres, 115 Harijan slums and 470 adibasi villages. In 1980-81 the government expects to electrify 16000 new villages.

Public Distribution System :

West Bengal has got a well-organised public distribution system. It is now the only State in the country where statutory rationing system is in force. Already 12.6 million people have been covered by statutory rationing system, the remaining population being covered by modified rationing. From 1st October 1978, the State Government has taken over the distribution of cement.

In 1979, besides distribution of rice and wheat from the ration shops, the Left Front Government distributed, at controlled prices, 19,569.0 tonnes of rape-seed oil, 1,650 of palm oil, 16,695.6 tonnes of dal, 27,21,000 exercise books, 14,70,350 match boxes and 250 quintals of tea.

It is worthwhile to mention that, regarding several essential goods including dal, cement, edible oils etc., West Bengal and, for that matter, any other State, has to depend on the supply lines originating from other States. Inspite of substantial increase in production in recent years, West Bengal is still a deficit State in respect of foodgrains. The market structure in the trading of these goods is known to be imperfect with consequences which are often reflected in unwarranted price-rise. The need for an effective public distribution system is felt seriously. But the public distribution conducted in an isolated manner at the State level is a distribution without any significant control over the supply lines. So the essential need is a comprehensive public distribution system at Central level covering all the States simultaneously.

West Bengal's Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu in September 1979 presented a programme of action so that inflation could be contained and the common people receive some relief.

Salient features of that Programme are: the Union Government must introduce a comprehensive system of public procurement and distribution covering the major cereals, pulses, salt, sugar, textiles, edible oils, kerosene, diesel oil, match boxes, paper and washing soaps. These items have to be sold at a uniform price all over the country.

It will be the endeavour of the Left Front Government to impress upon the new administration at the Centre the crucial importance of the measures indicated by it; the State Government also proposes to launch an unrelenting mass campaign to mobilise public opinion on this issue.

Problems of Reserve Mobilisation :

Limitations of the State Governments are well-known. All the elastic sources of revenue collection are concentrated in the hands of the Centre. A State Government has been debarred from taxing income and wealth originating in the State.

According to a study made by the West Bengal Government, while on the basis of the recommendations of the Sixth Finance Commission resources devolution to the States as a proportion of total revenue receipts of the Union Government amounted to 25.4 per cent; in terms of Seventh Finance Commission's award, this proportion would, during 1979-84, be of the order of 26.1 per cent only; or an increase of 0.7 per cent, which is no increase at all.

The power of the State Government of market borrowing is severely restricted. A State Government has no say over the pattern and priority of disbursement of bank loans or investments in the concerned state.

State's dependence upon the Centre in respect of financial matters is more or less complete. Even the allocated financial resources do not reach the States in due time, hampering execution of many vital works and projects. Our State particularly, is a victim of this callous attitude of the Centre.

Under the circumstances the Left Front is determined to raise the issue of the restructuring the Centre-State relationship time and again in the interest of harmonious and balanced development of all the regions.

State Governments can only impose indirect taxes of which Sales Tax is the only source of revenue.

Without taxing the common man, and giving some relief to him, the Left Front Government on its own has been able to raise substantial resources for developmental and social welfare activities. This was done through better fiscal and financial management and imposition of new taxation measures which do not hit the common man. Rates of taxes and duties have been raised in cases of goods which are not essential. The Left Ftont Government, during the last 3 years, has not imposed any tax which is likely to hit the common man.

Our State tops the list in respect of collection of small savings. The Left Front is being assisted by the mass organisations in the small savings drive.

Small Savings Collection was only Rs. 46.32 crores in 1976-77. It increased to Rs. 75.03 crores in 1977-78, 123.27 crores in 1978-79, and about Rs. 150 crores in 1979-80. The target for 1980-81 is Rs. 200 crores.

West Bengal's own tax revenue increased from Rs. 316.90 crores in 1976-77 to

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